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# ASSESSING THE POTENTIAL OF EU AGENCIES FOR THE FUTURE OF EU-TURKEY RELATIONS, PART III: MAPPING EU AGENCIES' COVERAGE IN THE TURKISH PRESS (2002-2021)

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## Executive Summary

As an EU candidate country, Turkey aspires to be part of Europe's future. EU agencies play a pivotal role in shaping this future. While Turkey's relations with EU agencies have taken a variety of forms, this policy brief assesses the relevance and perception of EU agencies in Turkey through focusing on media coverage of EU agencies in the Turkish media. Assessing the Turkish media coverage of EU agencies for the last 20 years, we find that EU agencies have attracted more and more attention across Turkish media over the last few years. But while some EU agencies attract near constant media coverage, there are still a few that have received limited media coverage or none at all despite their relevance for EU-Turkey relations. Turkish media can play a crucial role in informing the Turkish public about EU agencies and their role in shaping Europe's future, with great potential for the future of EU-Turkey relations.

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## Introduction

Generally speaking, media outlets are an important source of information. Through their reporting media outlets convey an impression of which political and social issues are currently important and consequently influence which topics people consider to be important. While the electorate's knowledge of relevant topics is indispensable for democracy, so too is Turkish citizens' understanding of the role of EU institutions and bodies in EU-Turkey relations.

So far, there has been little coverage of EU institutions and bodies in the Turkish media. This policy brief will focus on a particular set of EU bodies that now, more than ever, stand for solutions to European problems and as promoters of European integration: EU agencies. Beneath central EU institutions, such as the European Commission, the European Council, the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament, the European Central Bank, and the Court of Justice of the European Union, EU agencies are an often-neglected feature of European integration.

There are currently 48 EU agencies located in over 22 EU member states. As illustrated and assessed in two previous policy briefs, Turkey is currently engaged with 18 of them via bilateral and ad hoc working arrangements, some of which have been in place for more than 20 years.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Turkey plays a particularly privileged role in two EU agencies—the European Environment Agency (EEA) and the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA)<sup>2</sup>—as a member of these agencies' respective management boards (although without voting rights).

This policy brief will focus on the Turkish media's coverage of EU agencies over the last 20 years. Starting in the year 2002, the year in which we found the first instance of press coverage of EU agencies in Turkish online news media, we collected news from all local and national online news

outlets found through the free web-based news portal Google News. During our research, we did not focus on or exclude specific news outlets but included all local and national news sources, including international outlets reporting in Turkey such as [tr.euronews.com](http://tr.euronews.com) and [dw.com/tr](http://dw.com/tr).

Table 1 provides information on the top 20 online news outlets in terms of number of articles published on EU agencies. It also shows the total annual number of visits to each outlet's website. These websites receive millions of visits every year, which is noteworthy for reaching people in Turkey. Through these news articles, people in Turkey receive information about the activities of EU agencies, scientific reports, and other cooperation between Turkey and EU institutions.

To collect data on the Turkish media's coverage of EU agencies, we created a dataset of search results for media coverage related to all EU agencies. We filtered and refined search results by setting 'Turkey' as the search location and specified the period for results over the last 20 years. We systematically collected all news articles related to the 34 decentralized EU agencies that were covered in the Turkish media during this period by using their names and abbreviations as keywords. We conducted our search in both English and Turkish languages and with different wordings.

We found that in the early years examined in this study, few Turkish news outlets covered EU agencies, their role, their reports, or their relations with Turkey. In 2020, however, we found almost 1,000 news articles related to EU agencies. Additionally, many news articles related to EU agencies were published during two moments of enhanced Turkish media coverage: in 2014/15 and 2019/20. Overall, we noticed that most Turkish media coverage between 2002 and 2020 corresponds with formal cooperation arrangements between EU agencies and Turkey and their bilateral and geopolitical agenda (e.g., refugee crisis, COVID-19 pandemic).

**Table 1. Online news outlets in Turkey that have the most coverage of EU agencies (2002–2021)**

ONLINE NEWS OUTLET	TOTAL VISITS TO THE WEBSITE (ANNUALLY, IN MILLIONS)*	NUMBER OF NEWS ARTICLES
tr.euronews.com	-	152
dw.com/tr	-	151
hurriyet.com.tr	188.93	134
aa.com.tr (state-run press agency)	16.6	134
sozcu.com.tr	165.3	124
milliyet.com.tr	157.6	98
tr.sputniknews.com	7.5	69
haberler.com	47.3	67
trthaber.com	9.2	59
t24.com.tr	16.0	56
haberturk.com	96.4	48
sabah.com.tr	141.4	43
sondakika.com	41.1	39
yeniakit.com.tr	16.1	39
birgun.net	13.0	38
ntv.com.tr	36.3	32
cnnturk.com	41.0	24
mynet.com	68.2	16
cumhuriyet.com.tr	64.9	12
ensonhaber.com	31.9	11

\*Data collected on September 26, 2021

Source: [analytics.google.com](https://analytics.google.com), [www.similarweb.com](https://www.similarweb.com)

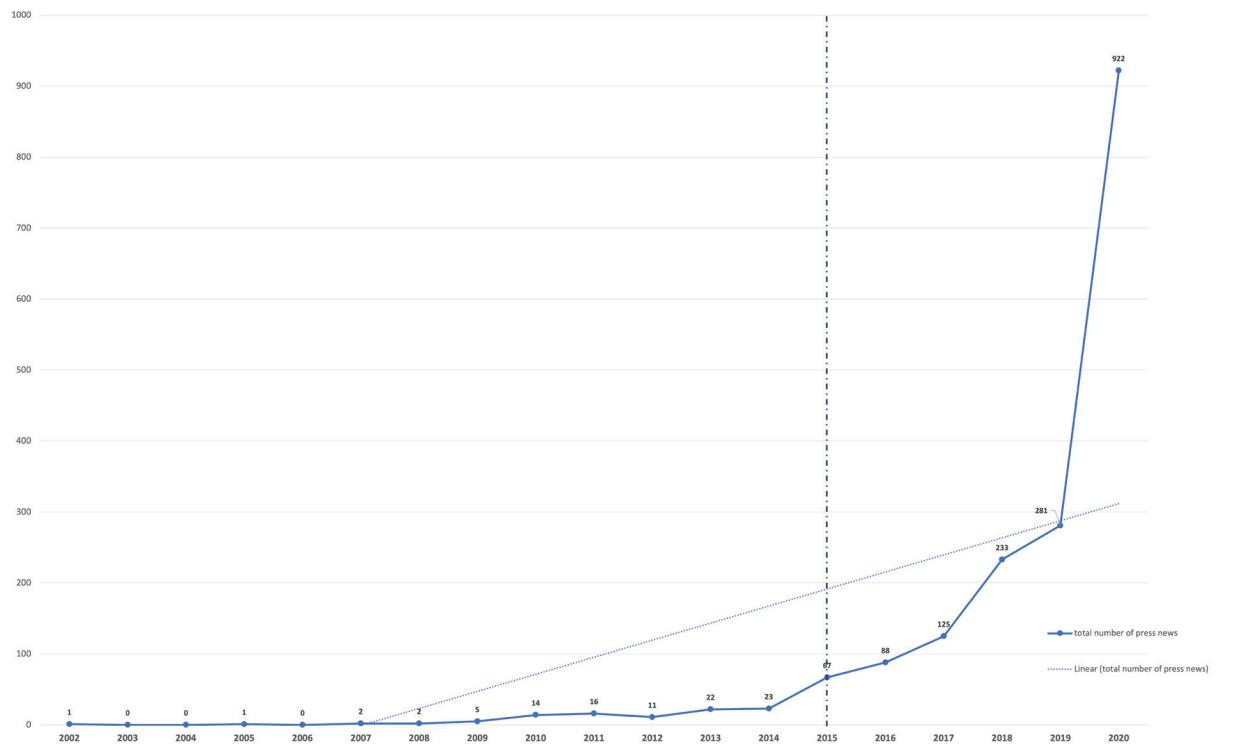
Lastly, we found that despite early working arrangements between Turkey and the EEA (European Environment Agency) and EMCDDA (European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction),<sup>3</sup> the Turkish media did not report on their work until ten years after cooperation began. This late discovery of the EEA and the EMCDDA coincides with the near negligence of CEPOL, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training,<sup>4</sup> despite its relevance for EU-Turkey relations and forms of co-operation since 2010.

## Evolution of Turkish Press Coverage of EU Agencies

*From no coverage during the early years to 922 online news articles in 2020*

Figure 1 displays the evolution of Turkish media coverage of EU agencies. During the first years of EU agencies' cooperation with Turkey, hardly any news on the matter was reported in the Turkish press. In 2009 the number of news articles related to EU agencies began to increase as five related news articles were published. Between 2009 and 2012, the number of news articles reached 14. In 2013 and 2014 the number of articles rose to above 20. This number increased exponentially from 2015 onward. While the number of articles more than tripled in 2015 (67), it increased fivefold in 2017 (125), more than tenfold in the following year (2018), and by a factor of 45 in 2020.

**Figure 1. Number of online Turkish news articles related to EU agencies (2002-2020)**



Source: Authors' own compilation

Looking at the graph more closely, there are two decisive increases in the number of news articles published in Turkish media on EU decentralized agencies: 2014/15 and 2019/20. The following three figures take a closer look at those time periods.

### *2014/15: Rise in coverage driven by Frontex, Europol and EEA*

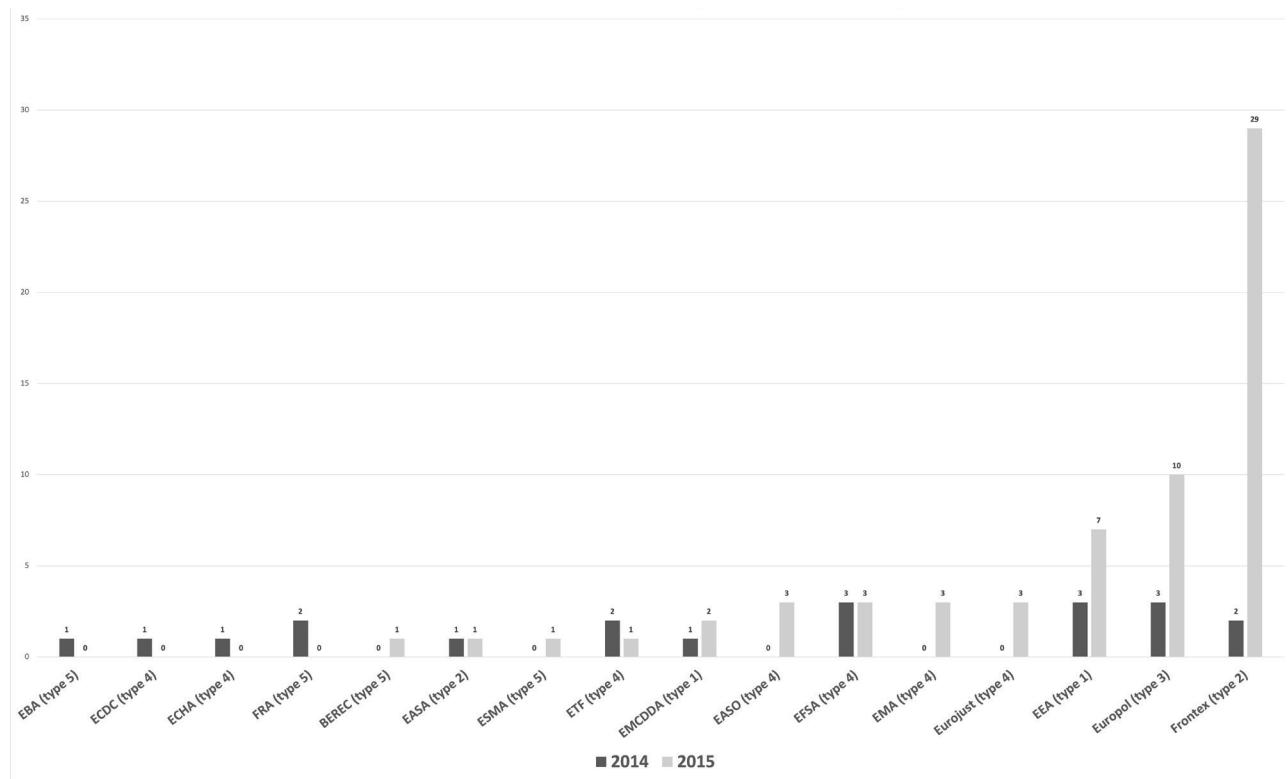
2014/15 marks the first significant increase in Turkish media coverage of EU agencies. Figure 2 illustrates that the considerable increase between 2014 and 2015 is related to Turkish media coverage of mainly three decentralized EU agencies: Frontex, Europol, and EEA. In 2015, for example, 67 online news articles on EU decentralized agencies were published in Turkish online news outlets, 29 of which concerned Frontex.

Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard, “supports, develops and coordinates European border management and assists in identifying migration patterns and trends in transnational crime. Frontex also specialises in preventing people smuggling, human trafficking as well as terrorism and works in coordination with national authorities and Europol.”<sup>5</sup>

Similar to Frontex, Europol acts as the “law enforcement agency of the EU. Europol’s primary responsibility is, among many other things, to provide assistance to the Member States in preventing and fighting against all types of international serious and organised crimes, cybercrimes and terrorism.”<sup>6</sup>

The EEA aims to “provide scientifically and, at the same time, independent information on environmental issues and to ensure that public and sector-specific industries and decision-makers are well informed about current and emerging environmental challenges.”<sup>7</sup>

**Figure 2. Number of online Turkish news articles related to EU agencies in 2014 and 2015, organized by agency**



Source: Authors' own compilation

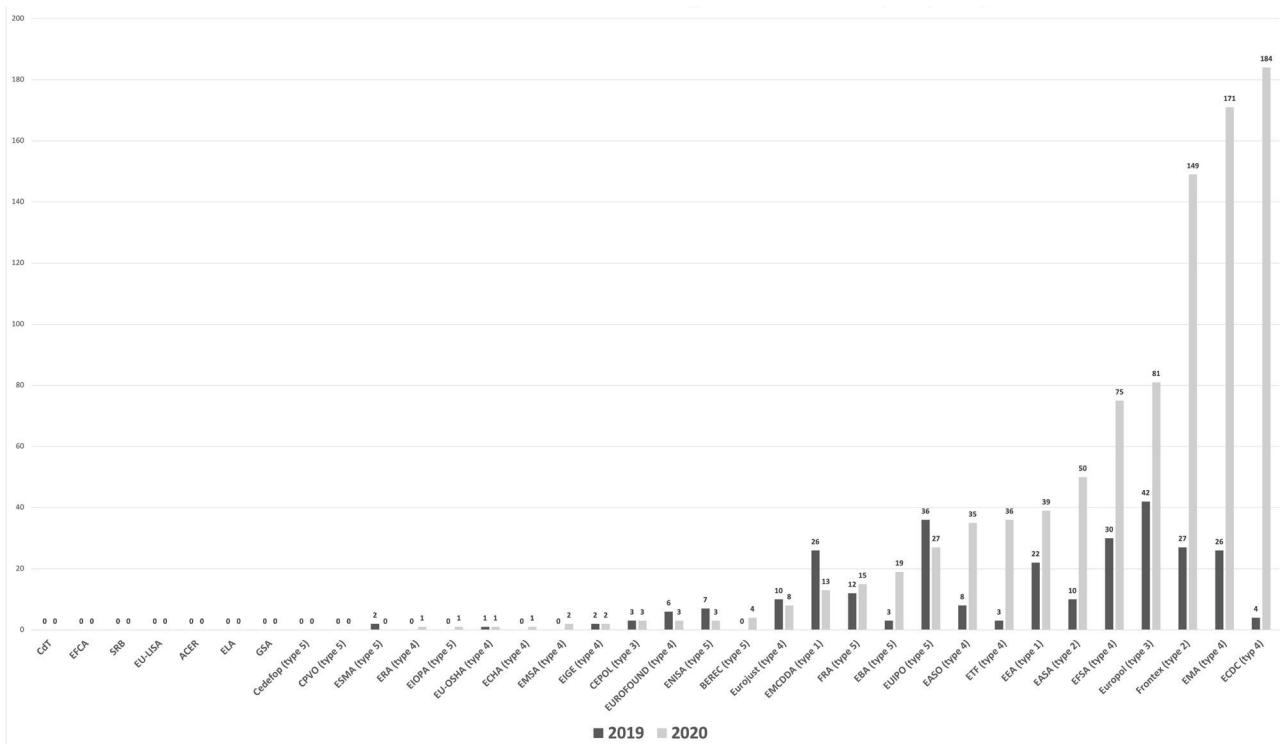
The significant increase in the number of press articles published in 2015 on Frontex is closely linked to the refugee crisis in Syria. Overnight, Frontex became well known in Turkey due to the emergence and day-to-day presence of the refugee crisis on Turkish soil.

Like the articles related to Frontex, most press articles in 2015 that mention Europol and EASO are about the refugee crisis and its consequences. In addition to security issues, human smuggling between Turkey and Greece was one of the most common topics in news articles at the time.

### *2019/20: Jump driven by ECDC, EMA, Frontex, Europol, EFSA, EASA, EEA, ETF and EASO*

Figure 3 visualizes the second important increase in Turkish media coverage of EU agencies. While Frontex, Europol, and EEA are still among the top 10 most frequently mentioned agencies in the Turkish press, it is the increased coverage of agencies such as the ECDC, EMA, EFSA, EASA, ETF, and EASO that contributes to the tripling of the number of news articles related to EU agencies in the Turkish press—from 281 to 922—between 2019 and 2020.

**Figure 3. Number of online Turkish news articles related to EU agencies in 2019 and 2020**



Source: Authors' own compilation

As in 2015, Frontex is one of the most reported on EU agencies in Turkey. Together with EASO, the increase in illegal immigration via Turkey to Greece and border security issues between Turkey and the EU were the main topics covered in the Turkish press during 2019/20. As illegal immigration and the refugee crisis have been a significant challenge for Turkey for years, such press articles are predictably becoming more prominent in the Turkish media.

Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, EMA was mentioned the most among all EU agencies in the Turkish media. The Turkish media has clearly reflected the crucial role of the EMA and ECDC in combating the COVID-19 pandemic. As might be expected, press articles concerning new developments related to the COVID-19 vaccine made up the majority of all press articles related to the EMA. The number of press articles about the two EU agencies has exponentially increased by more than ten times compared to the previous year. Both agencies became very important and consolidated their presence in the Turkish media.

As food safety and emerging risks in food supply chains have gained prominence due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EFSA, together with the EMA and ECDC, has also received significant media coverage in Turkey.

Among the top five EU agencies most frequently covered in the Turkish press over the last 20 years, EMA has received the most coverage of the EU agencies (mentioned in 511 news articles), followed by Frontex (326), Europol (285), ECDC (250), and EFSA (218). As mentioned above, due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, EMA was the most frequently mentioned EU agency in the Turkish media. Together with ECDC, both agencies became very important and consolidated their presence in Turkish media.

ECDC "aims to ensure the protection of human health through the prevention and monitoring of human diseases. ECDC thus identifies, evaluates and communicates present and emerging threats to human health from transmissible diseases."<sup>8</sup>

EMA is another decentralized EU agency that "en-

sures the scientific assessment, surveillance, and safety monitoring of medicines for human and veterinary use in the EU. EMA also grants marketing authorisations for medicines in the EU.”<sup>9</sup>

EFSA is a competent authority that “provides scientific advice associated with direct or indirect food and feed safety risks. The scope of its activities includes not only nutrition for people but also animals and plants.”<sup>10</sup>

EASA functions as the “center of the European Union’s aviation safety strategy aiming to endorse the fundamental Community standards for safety and environmental protection in civil aviation.”<sup>11</sup>

ETF primarily aims to “support partner countries while enhancing their vocational education and training and strengthening their human capital concerning the EU’s external relations policies.”<sup>12</sup>

EASO is another decentralized EU agency that functions as a “competence centre in the field of asylum, facilitates, coordinates and strengthens functional cooperation among Member States on the diverse aspects of asylum.”<sup>13</sup>

### *EU agencies with formal cooperation arrangements with Turkey receive more coverage in the Turkish media*

There are currently 48 EU agencies, located in over 22 EU member states. As we have illustrated and assessed in two previous policy briefs, Turkey is currently engaged with 18 of these agencies via working arrangements.<sup>14</sup> Turkey plays a particularly privileged role as a management board member without voting rights in two of these agencies: the European Environment Agency (EEA) and the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA).<sup>15</sup>

All agencies with which Turkey has established different types of working arrangements (i.e., participation in both bilateral technical arrangements and ad-hoc arrangements) over the last 20 years have been covered in Turkish news outlets online. As Figure 4 illustrates, the distribution of media coverage varies widely across the different types of working arrangements EU agencies have with Turkey. Instead, EU agencies can be grouped in five

clusters according to the degree of news coverage in the Turkish media.

Among the top five EU agencies most frequently covered in the Turkish press over the last 20 years, EMA has received the most coverage of the EU agencies (mentioned in 511 news articles), followed by Frontex (326), Europol (285), ECDC (250), and EFSA (218). These agencies represent the first cluster.

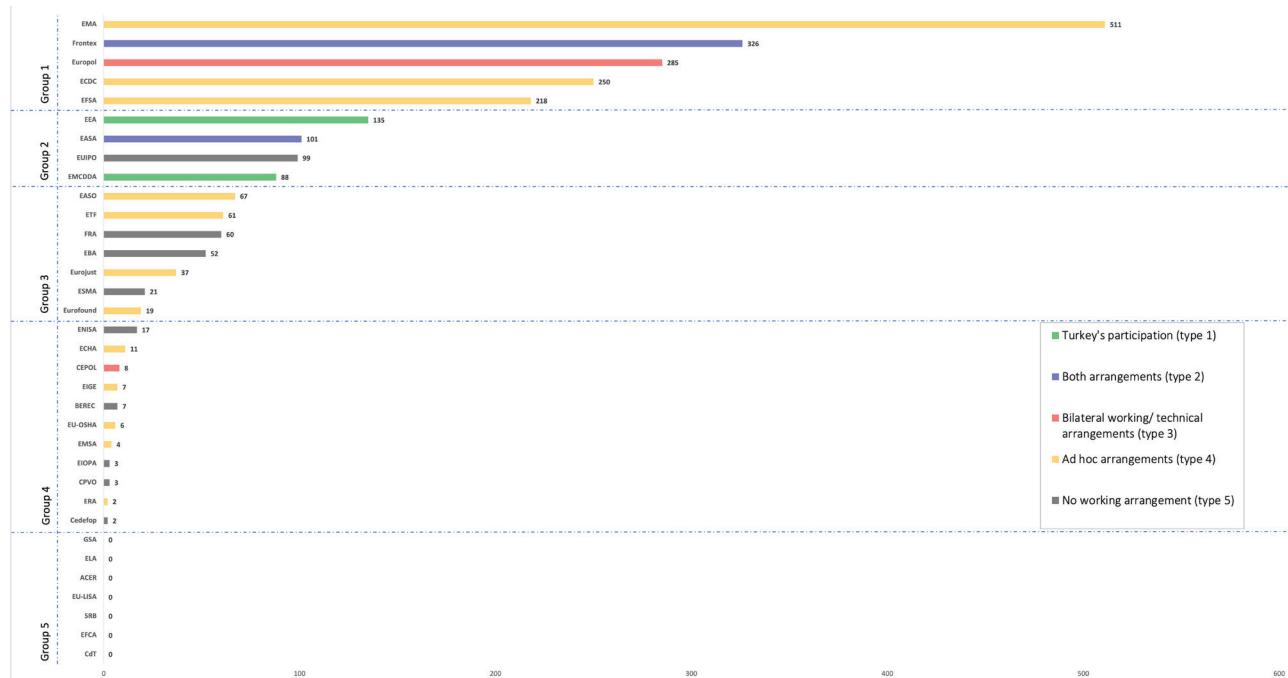
The two EU agencies in which Turkey participates in their respective management boards (although without voting right), the EEA and EMCDDA, are widely covered by the Turkish press but are not among the top five most frequently mentioned, forming a distinct group of their own together with EASA and EUIPO, the latter of which does not yet have any formal cooperation arrangement with Turkey.

A third set of EU agencies, including EASO, ETF, FRA, EBA, Eurojust, ESMA and Eurofound, have experienced modest Turkish media coverage over the last 20 years. FRA, EBA, and ESMA do not yet have any formal cooperation arrangement with Turkey.

A fourth group including ENISA, ECHA, CEPOL, EIGE, BEREC, EU-OSHA, EMSA, EIOPA, CPVO, EBA, and Cedefop have received little media coverage in Turkey over the last 20 years. This is particularly striking for CEPOL, considering its comparatively elaborate cooperation arrangement with Turkey. CEPOL and the Turkish National Police Institute established a cooperation agreement in 2010 “to define the relations between two institutions. Among others, this cooperation shall enhance the exchange of best practices, and grant the Turkish National Police Institute access to the electronic network. Furthermore, this Agreement shall harmonise standards on police training concerning cross-border cooperation between police forces.”<sup>16</sup>

Some of the EU agencies that have not yet been covered by the Turkish media (e.g., GSA, ELA, EU-Lisa, ACER, SRB, EFCA, CdT) are those EU agencies that have not yet established any type of co-operation with Turkey.

**Figure 4. Total number of mentions for each EU agency in the Turkish press (2002-June 2021)**



Source: Authors' own compilation

### *The late discovery of EEA and EMCDDA in Turkish media*

Turkey has had a privileged position in two EU agencies: the EEA and EMCDDA, since 2003 and 2007, respectively. Despite Turkey's participation in both agencies' management boards (without voting rights), both agencies did not receive attention in the Turkish media until 2014.

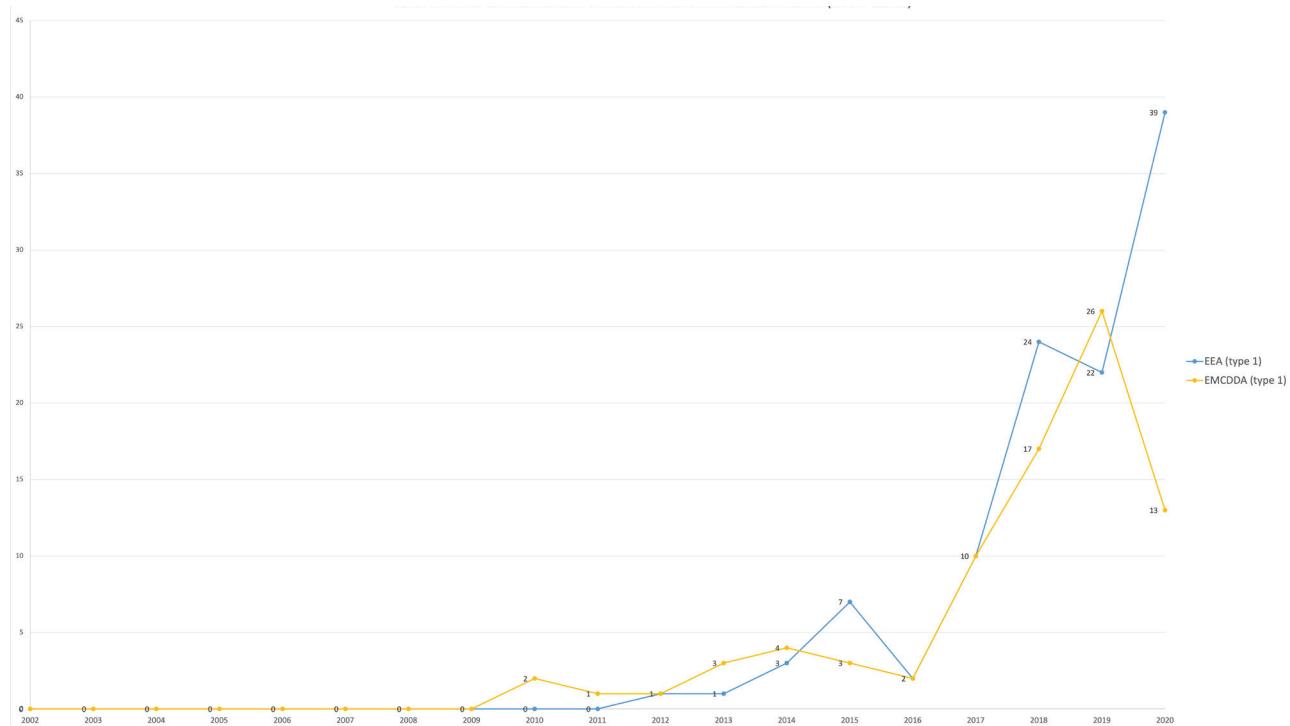
Figure 5 displays the total number times that the EEA and EMCDDA have been mentioned in Turkish online media over the last 20 years. Turkish attention on EU agencies has increased since 2014, most significantly after 2017.

The EEA publishes scientific reports on air and climate, nature, and sustainability, among other topics. The articles that mention the EEA typically cover Turkey's environmental issues that are compared with other EEA member states. The Turkish media attaches considerable importance to the EEA and its reports, considering them as reliable scientific sources. This is one reason why the Turkish media covers the EEA and its reports to a

considerable extent. As environmental issues have become increasingly important, more and more news about the EEA in Turkey has been published in Turkish media in recent years.

The EMCDDA covers drug-related issues. Drug use is a crucial topic in Turkey, and according to both Turkish media and EMCDDA, it is becoming more and more hazardous for Turkey. In this regard, EMCDDA is one of the first institutions whose reports are taken very seriously in Turkey. Consequently, considerable coverage is given to the EMCDDA in Turkish media, and, like the EEA, the EMCDDA's reports are considered to be reliable and scientific. Most press articles in Turkish media cover comparisons between Turkey and other EMCDDA member countries regarding drug use and its social impact.

**Figure 5. Total number of mentions of EEA and EMCDDA in Turkish media (2002-2020)**



Source: Authors' own compilation

## Policy Outlook and Recommendations

Turkey is important for Europe's future, remaining a "key partner for the European Union in essential areas of joint interest, such as migration, counter-terrorism, economy, trade, energy and transport."<sup>17</sup> The future of those policy areas is shaped by EU agencies, too. Cooperating with them as a third party via different arrangements might be one of many elements that can be used to enhance EU-Turkey relations.

Turkish media plays an important role in informing the Turkish public about EU agencies and their potential for EU-Turkey relations. While Turkish news coverage of EU agencies has increased substantially more recently, some EU agencies remain in a blind spot still.

This policy brief does not answer the question of why it took the Turkish media so long to report on these agencies but rather intends to raise the issue bias vis-à-vis a few agencies and, even more problematic, the obvious negligence of the Turkish press in reporting on several EU agencies.

As mentioned above, the cooperation between CEPOL and the National Police Institute of Turkey, for example, "highlights the significance of training police forces and enables them to harmonise standards for cross-border cooperation," among other benefits. Such examples of cooperation also have the potential to contribute to Turkey's integration into the EU. Especially in times of crisis, such as the refugee crisis in Syria, increased cooperation between Turkey and the EU in this essential area of joint interest is indispensable.<sup>18</sup>

Next to those with whom Turkey has already established well-functioning working arrangements,<sup>19</sup> the Turkish media might also identify EU agencies as institutions with great potential for increased cooperation with Turkey in the future, such as ACER, for example.

ACER is set up to "integrate and complete the internal energy market for electricity and natural gas in Europe. ACER's mission is to bring the benefits of greater integration of energy markets across Europe while ensuring low-carbon supply at the most economical possible cost."<sup>20</sup>

In times of energy crises in Europe, but also in the world, Turkey's possible cooperation with ACER could be beneficial for both the Turkish and European energy markets. The Turkish Ministry of Trade has prepared the National Green Deal Plan,<sup>21</sup> which mainly aims to bring Turkey in line with the European Green Deal. Both agreements have common goals, such as limiting carbon emissions and a clean, economic, and secure energy supply.<sup>22</sup> Co-operation between the two actors via ACER could potentially help to find solutions for addressing the energy crisis.

All in all, we believe that EU agencies offer the potential to improve the future of EU-Turkey relations as EU agencies may turn out to be short- and medium-term stepping-stones to future full membership in the decade(s) ahead for Turkey. It would be useful if the Turkish media could pick up on this and spread the word about EU agencies' pivotal role in shaping Europe's future.

## Endnotes

- 1 | Michael Kaeding, "Assessing the Potential of EU Agencies for the Future of EU-Turkey Relations, Part II: A Systematic Mapping of Cooperation between EU agencies and Turkey (1999-2021)," *IPC-Mercator Policy Brief* (Istanbul: Istanbul Policy Center, October 2021).
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## Annex: Overview of all 34 decentralized EU agencies

ABBREVIATION	NAME	LOCATION	FOUNDING YEAR
<b>ACER</b>	European Union Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators	Ljubljana (Slovenia)	2009
<b>CdT</b>	Translation Centre for the Bodies of the EU	Luxembourg (Luxembourg)	1994
<b>Cedefop</b>	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training	Thessaloniki (Greece)	1975
<b>CEPOL</b>	European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training	Budapest (Hungary)	2005
<b>CPVO</b>	Community Plant Variety Office	Angers (France)	1995
<b>EASA</b>	European Aviation Safety Agency	Köln (Germany)	2002
<b>EASO</b>	European Asylum Support Office	Valletta (Malta)	2010
<b>EBA</b>	European Banking Authority	Paris (France)	2011
<b>ECDC</b>	European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control	Stockholm (Sweden)	2005
<b>ECHA</b>	European Chemicals Agency	Helsinki (Finland)	2007
<b>EFCA</b>	European Fisheries Control Agency	Vigo (Spain)	2005
<b>EFSA</b>	European Food Safety Agency	Parma (Italy)	2002
<b>EIGE</b>	European Institute for Gender Equality	Vilnius (Lithuania)	2010
<b>EIOPA</b>	European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority	Frankfurt am Main (Germany)	2011
<b>ELA</b>	European Labour Authority	Bratislava (Slovakia)	2019
<b>EMA</b>	European Medicine Agency	Amsterdam (The Netherlands)	1995
<b>EMCDDA</b>	European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction	Lisbon (Portugal)	1993
<b>EMSA</b>	European Maritime Safety Agency	Lisbon (Portugal)	2002
<b>ENISA</b>	European Union Agency for Cybersecurity	Heraklion (Greece)	2004
<b>ERA</b>	European Railway Agency	Valenciennes (France)	2004
<b>ESMA</b>	European Securities and Markets Authority	Paris (France)	2011
<b>ETF</b>	European Training Foundation	Turin (Italy)	1994
<b>EEA</b>	European Environment Agency	Copenhagen (Denmark)	1990
<b>EUIPO</b>	European Union Intellectual Property Office	Alicante (Spain)	1994
<b>eu-LISA</b>	European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice	Tallinn (Estonia)	2011
<b>EU-OSHA</b>	European Agency for Safety and Health at Work	Bilbao (Spain)	1994
<b>EUROFOUND</b>	European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions	Dublin (Ireland)	1975
<b>Eurojust</b>	European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation	The Hague (The Netherlands)	2002
<b>Europol</b>	European Law Enforcement Agency	The Hague (The Netherlands)	1999
<b>FRA</b>	Fundamental Rights Agency	Vienna (Austria)	2007
<b>Frontex</b>	European Border and Coast Guard Agency	Warsaw (Poland)	2004
<b>BEREC</b>	Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications	Riga (Latvia)	2010
<b>GSA</b>	EU Agency for the Space Programme	Prague (Czech Republic)	2004
<b>SRB</b>	Single Resolution Board	Brussels (Belgium)	2015

Source: [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/agencies\\_de](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/agencies_de) (August 1, 2021)

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